

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6326

As of January 27, 2012

Title: An act relating to phasing-in statewide implementation of the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills.

Brief Description: Phasing-in statewide implementation of the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe and Litzow; by request of Department of Early Learning and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Lidia Mori (786-7755)

Background: The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is a kindergarten assessment process developed in collaboration with a diverse group of stakeholders that includes elementary teachers and principals, special education specialists, early care and education providers, parents, and representatives from Washington's Tribal communities. WaKIDS encourages families to be partners in their child's education, gives kindergarten teachers information about the development of children in their classrooms so instruction can be tailored to individual needs, and aligns practices of early learning professionals and kindergarten teachers to support smooth transitions for children. WAKIDS provides information about the developmental status of children in Washington at the start of kindergarten. Another of WaKIDS's important objectives is to identify a common method for learning about the developmental status of children entering kindergarten across the state.

WaKIDS was piloted during the 2010-2011 school year; two reports were produced from the data obtained. The first report focused on the whole child assessment; data across the three piloted assessment tools was reported for all students and then disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, primary language, and free or reduced-price lunch eligibility. Across the three instruments, the report indicates that nearly 30 percent of children entered kindergarten with language and literacy; cognitive, social, emotional and physical health; and development skills that were below kindergarten entry expectations. The second report provides

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information about the teachers' experiences with the assessment tool, the parents' opinions about the assessment tools and transition process, and the early learning collaboration. The second report concludes that Teaching Strategies GOLD is more likely to be used by early learning providers and is also currently used more widely by early learning providers. This finding led to Teaching Strategies GOLD being the recommended assessment tool.

The 2011 Legislature passed Senate Bill 5427, which made the use of WaKIDS optional for state-funded full-day kindergarten classrooms in the 2011-2012 school year and mandatory starting in the 2012-2013 school year, with the exception of students who have been excused from participation by their parents or guardians. Other schools may choose to participate. During the 2011-2012 school year, WaKIDS will include 68 school districts, 165 schools, 479 teachers, and 11,000 kindergarteners.

Summary of Bill: In addition to those students to whom WaKIDS is being administered in the 2012-13 school year who are enrolled in state-funded full-day kindergarten programs, administration of WaKIDS to other kindergarten students will be phased in to the extent funds are available beginning in the 2012-13 school year as directed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) in consultation with the Department of Early Learning (DEL). To the extent that funds are available, in the 2014-15 school year and thereafter, WaKIDS must be administered to all students enrolled in kindergarten programs in the public school with the exception of students who have been excused from participation by their parents or guardians.

Until WaKIDS is fully implemented throughout the state, SPI, in consultation with the director of DEL, may grant annual, renewable waivers from the requirement to administer the WaKIDS. A school district seeking a waiver for one or more of its schools must submit to the Office of SPI an application that includes a description of the kindergarten readiness assessment and transition processes it proposes to administer instead of the WaKIDS; an explanation of why administration of WaKIDS would be unduly burdensome; an explanation of how administration of the alternative assessment will support social-emotional and physical health and cognitive growth and development of children; support early learning providers and parent involvement; and inform instruction.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 14, 2012.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) supports WaKIDS for five reasons: it will give us a statewide read on the readiness of kids using the same tool; it will give teachers information on how kids are doing at the beginning of the year; it will build a stronger connection between elementary schools and early learning providers; it will provide information regarding which schools face the most challenges with incoming students; and it was an important component of getting the Race to the Top grant. WaKIDS has to be thoughtfully implemented and there have to be

adequate resources to implement it successfully. While the additional \$2.3 million we obtained for teacher training in the Race to the Top grant will be helpful, the 2014-15 implementation date for WaKIDS is quite ambitious. Funding full day kindergarten on the original schedule would be helpful in the implementation. Between now and 2014, we're going to have to use the funds available through the Race to the Top grant. There is some state funding in the budget, some dollars from the Gates Foundation, and DEL has taken some of their federal money for this also. Some additional funding may be needed or we may have to phase WaKIDS in more gradually.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Amy Blondin, DEL; Bob Butts, OSPI.